

REMARKS

This Amendment is in response to the Office Action dated January 29, 2009 (the Action).

A Request for Examiner Interview on PTOL 413A is submitted herewith.
Accordingly, an Examiner Interview is requested prior to any subsequent Official Action.

The Action states that Claims 19-20 are directed to an invention that is independent or distinct from the invention originally claimed. Accordingly, Claims 19-20 are withdrawn from consideration.

Claims 16-18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Claims 16-18 have been canceled, and therefore, Applicants submit that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, is moot.

Claims 1-4, 6-12 and 14-17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,484,771 to Schulz ("Schulz"). Claims 1-12 and 14-18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over DE 2838514 to Kirchkamp ("Kirchkamp").

In response, Claims 1 and 15 have been amended, and certain dependent claims have been amended or canceled for consistency. Support for the above amendments can be found, for example, in Figures 5-12 and in Applicant's Specification, on page 8, line 10 – page 13, line 23.

A Request for Continued Examination is filed herewith, and entry of the above amendments is respectfully requested.

I. The Section 103 Rejections

The Action takes the position that "applicant has not claimed what is shown and argued in the drawings on page 8 of the response filed 10/2/08." See the Action, page 8. Applicants respectfully disagree for the reasons discussed in Applicants' paper submitted October 2, 2008. However, in order to expedite prosecution, Claim 1 has been amended as follows (emphasis added):

1. A gland plate comprising:
 - a rigid, annular element comprising at least two axially spaced, radially extending walls having a thickness of from about 0.1 to 4mm, the radially extending walls having a center orifice in the center of the radially extending walls and an outer circumferential perimeter extending around an outer edge of the radially extending walls;
 - an outer wall extending axially and continuously between the radially extending walls and around the outer circumferential perimeter of the radially extending walls;
 - an inner wall extending axially and continuously between the radially extending walls and around the center orifice; and
 - at least one additional orifice formed in the at least two radially extending walls between the center orifice and the outer circumferential perimeter of the radially extending walls and defined by a first axially extending circumferential flange in one of the two radially extending walls and a second axially extending circumferential flange in the other of the two radially extending walls, wherein the first and second flanges are joined such that the first and second flanges extend around the at least one additional orifice and between the two axially spaced, radially extending walls.

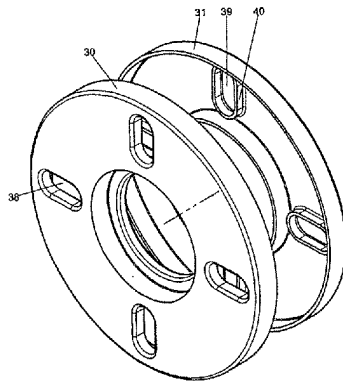


Figure 5

Independent Claims 14 and 15 recite analogous recitations as those emphasized above with respect to Claim 1. Figure 5 is an exploded isometric view of two pressed components according to some embodiments of the invention. When the two components of Figure 5 are pressed together, they form the gland plate recited in Claim 1. As shown in Figure 5 (above), the additional orifice 39 is defined by a flange in the radially extending walls between the center orifice and the outer circumferential perimeter of the radially extending walls. In this

configuration, strengthening is provided directly around the additional orifice(s).

Applicants submit that neither Shultz nor Kirchkamp disclose or render obvious the recitations emphasized above, including the at least one additional orifice formed in the at least two radially extending walls between the center orifice and the outer circumferential perimeter of the radially extending walls. Schultz and Kirchkamp also do not disclose or render obvious that the additional orifice is defined by a first axially extending circumferential flange in one of the two radially extending walls and a second axially extending circumferential flange in the other of the two radially extending walls or that the first and second flanges are joined such that the first and second flanges extend around the at least one additional orifice and between the two axially spaced, radially extending walls. In particular, the walls (e.g., elements 6, 7b and 7c) in Shultz are annular to the entire gland, rather than around an orifice formed in a radially extending wall. This recitation is also not disclosed by the plate elements 1, 2 or 9 of Kirchkamp as shown in Figure 2.

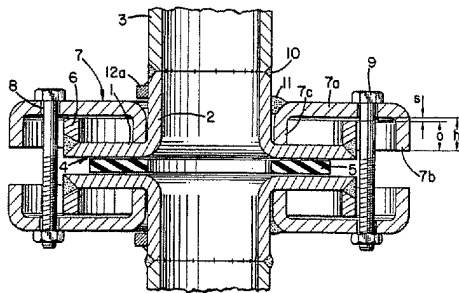


FIG. 1

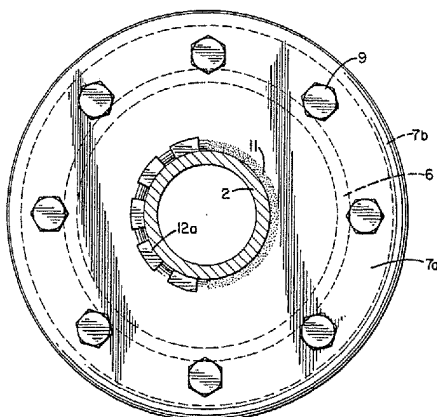


FIG. 2

Schulz

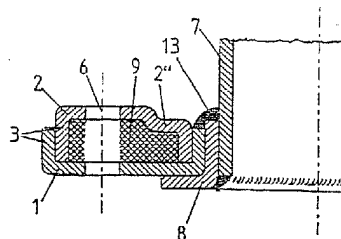


Fig. 2

Kirchkamp

In addition, Shultz and Kirchkamp do not disclose or render obvious a rigid, annular element that includes at least two axially spaced, radially extending walls having a thickness of from about 0.1 to 4 mm, the outer wall that extends axially and continuously between the radially extending walls around the outer circumferential perimeter, or the inner wall that extends axially and continuously between the radially extending walls around the center orifice.

For at least the above reasons, Applicants submit that independent Claims 1, 14 and 15 are patentable over the cited art and request that the rejection of Claims 1, 14 and 15 and Claims 4-7 and 10-12 depending therefrom be withdrawn.

II. Claims 19-20


Claims 19-20 are currently withdrawn as being directed to a non-elected species. However, Claims 19-20 depend indirectly from Claim 1, and Claim 1 is patentable for at least the reasons discussed above. Accordingly, Applicants request rejoinder and allowance of Claims 19-20. *See* MPEP § 821.04.

Attorney Docket No.: 9623-6
Application No.: 10/519,279
Filed: August 19, 2005
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CONCLUSION

Accordingly, Applicants submit that the present application is in condition for allowance and the same is earnestly solicited. The Examiner is encouraged to telephone the undersigned at 919-854-1400 for resolution of any outstanding issues.

Respectfully submitted,



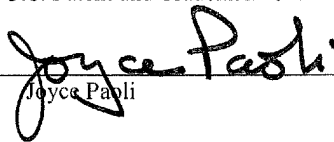
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CERTIFICATION OF TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being transmitted via the Office electronic filing system in accordance with § 1.6(a)(4) to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on June 29, 2009.

Signature: _____


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